

*Bill Will Fund Troops in Iraq, Afghanistan; Aid Workers, Fishermen, Others Impacted By Spill*  
July 1, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) voted in support of legislation that included \$304 million in funding to aid Gulf Coast communities impacted by the BP oil disaster. As passed by the House of Representatives, the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2010 (H.R. 4899) makes significant investments to help workers who are unemployed because of the disaster, including fishermen and other self-employed workers.

**“Louisianians are now in our third month of dealing with the impact of the BP oil spill in our Gulf and on our shores,”** said Congressman Melancon. **“For the workers and small business owners who depend on the Gulf for their livelihoods, this ongoing disaster is eating through their savings and causing endless worry about what the future holds. With the funding in this bill, thousands of families in Louisiana will now have at least some level of confidence that they will be able to afford the bare necessities until the leak is stopped, the oil is cleaned up, and life can return to some semblance of normal.”**

The legislation also provides \$37.12 billion for U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and \$5.1 billion to replenish the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund. This funding is needed to pay for known costs for past disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike, and Gustav, and for needs that emerge from new disasters. In Louisiana, FEMA Disaster Relief Funding is needed to rebuild the Medical Center of Louisiana (formerly, New Orleans’ Charity Hospital), and for other ongoing recovery projects.

Among others, the following investments in oil disaster response and recovery were included in Supplemental Appropriations Act, as amended by the House:

- o \$83 million for unemployment assistance related to the oil spill and an oil spill relief employment program;
- o \$130 million for an unemployment benefits program for the self-employed (i.e., fisherman) and for training and employment services (*added by the House*);
- o \$14 million to respond to economic impacts on fishermen;
- o \$7 million for NOAA oil spill response activities, including scientific investigations and sampling;
- o \$5 million for economic recovery planning; and
- o \$31 million for the Department of the Interior to conduct additional inspections and enforcement and to strengthen oversight and regulation and for the EPA to conduct a long-term risk study.

The BP oil disaster has impacted three major sectors of Louisiana’s economy – fishing, offshore energy production, and tourism – affecting thousands of workers.

Last month, Congressman Melancon secured a fisheries disaster declaration from the federal government, paving the way for financial assistance for fishermen and small businesses in the seafood industry. Melancon [began calling for the fisheries assistance in April](#), when he told the head of NOAA’s Fisheries Service and the Secretary of Commerce that the oil intrusion resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster would likely damage the fragile habitats on

which Louisiana's fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers depend.

To reduce the long-term economic harm of the oil disaster, Congressman Melancon has also been pressing the federal government to [end the moratorium](#) on deep-water drilling and clarify new regulations for shallow-water drilling that have created a "de facto" moratorium in the Gulf. The offshore energy industry is a major economic engine for south Louisiana, providing thousands of jobs and supporting numerous locally-based service companies in Congressman Melancon's Congressional district.

Congressman Melancon has also called on BP to suspend bonus payments to top-ranking executives and apply the money toward helping Louisianians impacted by the oil spill in the Gulf. [In a letter to BP](#) Chairman Carl-Henrik Svanberg, Congressman Melancon noted that BP CEO Tony Hayward's 2009 bonus of \$3 million would cover the cost of salaries for 50 offshore workers who have lost their jobs due to the moratorium imposed because of the oil spill.

Congressman Melancon represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana's Third Congressional District.

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